

UPF and Y Service Club's relief efforts for victims of Hurricanes in Honduras

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In the late 1970s, True Father said that Unificationists should work in conjunction with Christian organizations, such as YMCA International. On July 16, 2012, in the framework of the launch of the Global Network of Women Leaders for Peace (The Abel Women's United Nations), True Father said:

So far, we have worked as a consultative body to the United Nations with a network of individuals, ambassadors for peace.... However, the work for world peace carried out so far does not have to remain at that level. It already has the potential to expand and develop to the next level -- working in solidarity and cooperatively with other NGOs around the world and following the path toward the final establishment of world peace.

As already published in previous articles, UPF Honduras has been working on strengthening its efforts with municipalities both nationally and internationally, such as its association with the mayor's city office in Tela, Honduras, and Nutley, New Jersey's town office in the United States. Both cities, together with UPF, are executing Peace Parks in cooperation with the NGO International Cities of Peace (ICP) and did establish these cities as Cities of Peace in 2018 and 2019, respectively.



Next, mutually cooperative ties developed with Y's Men International (a YMCA Service branch) to initiate training in character education for the school system in the city of Tela, aimed at advancing the city's natural tourist industry. This training was to begin in April 2020, but due to the pandemic, the activity has been postponed until conditions are more favorable.

On top of the Covid-19 pandemic, Honduras was recently hit by two consecutive hurricanes, Eta and Iota, between November 3 and 13, horribly affecting the already fragile situation of the port city, Tela. Subsequently, the Y Service Club of North Jersey (US) called upon Mario Salinas, director of UPF Honduras (who was also recently installed as president of the Y Service Club of Tegucigalpa, Honduras) to immediately set up a relief plan for the smaller communities most affected by landslides resulting from the hurricanes, leaving them isolated from the larger communities.

The Y Service Club of North Jersey carried out a fundraiser in the US, and UPF Honduras and Y Service of Tegucigalpa director Mario Salinas, together with Dr. Maritza Morel, a journalist, and Pastor Elsa Moncada, a member of the Inter-religious Association of Peace and Development (IAPD) Honduras carried out the project. They reached an agreement with the authorities of the Municipality of Tela, that is, with Mayor Darío Munguía, his son Gerardo Munguía, Lilian García, director of Social Development of

Tela, and Public Relations Officer Larisa Calix, and with the support of community leaders and the Tela Police Department on how and where to best use the donated funds.

The donations were used to acquire bags of food, clothing, baby milk and bottled drinking water for the people most severely impacted by the hurricanes. These efforts clearly supported opening greater lines of communication, exchange and cooperation, affirming the principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values for the sake of future activities.

Reaching isolated villages



On the morning of December 3, 2020, a joint UPF and Y Service delegation traveled from the capital city of Honduras to the city of Tela, and then to the smaller villages left isolated by the floods or landslides caused by the hurricanes, to deliver the humanitarian aid donated by the North Jersey Y Service Club.

The group traveled three hundred kilometers from Tegucigalpa to Tela on a Thursday morning, made the deliveries on Friday and traveled back home on Saturday. Upon arrival in the city of Tela, Mayor Darío Munguía immediately gave a

summary of his communities' entire situation and offered all the details regarding the needs of their people. In addition, he provided logistical and other support from his office to make possible the delivery of the aid to the neediest people.

Early on Friday morning, we joined the Tela team, made up of architect Gerardo Munguía (the mayor's son), who has always been supportive of all the initiatives that Mario Salinas has presented since 2018; Mrs. Lilian García, and Mrs. Larisa Calix, together with other city leaders and the Tela Police Department. The first activity that day was to load the vehicles with the donated bags of food, clothing from the Good Will people of Tegucigalpa (the capital city) and milk and water donated by the municipality.

For the sake of transparency and to avoid the inevitable political implications, donated goods were delivered through use of one vehicle provided by city leaders, a second personal vehicle owned by Gerardo Munguía and a third vehicle belonging to the police.

Mayor Munguía came to greet and thank the team. At that time, Daniel Mohan, the president of the North Jersey Y Service Club, was calling to thank the delegation for the mobilization and to offer best wishes. The mayor and Y Service President Mohan had the opportunity to exchange a few words by video call.

The challenge was to reach the communities of San Juan, Jerusalem and La Fortaleza that had been isolated by the landslides and that otherwise had no means of transportation to go down to the city and obtain food. The municipality made efforts to clean up the roads to allow for vehicular passage. It was incredible watching the vehicles bounce up and down due to the deep potholes; normal cars would never have been able to manage.

At the beginning of the trip, the weather was dry and sunny when the group arrived at the community of San Juan where the first delivery was made. Then, going further up to the next village, named Jerusalem, as the vehicles ascended the steep hills, the weather changed dramatically from dry to cool, cool to cold, and cold to rainy; at the top it was cloudy and misty. At this point the road was completely muddy, so that the vehicles could not advance any farther. The group was lucky that one of the bulldozers, sent by the mayor's office, was actually in the process of opening the road and came to their rescue.

Only two vehicles were able to finally arrive in the cold, rainy, cloudy and foggy village of Jerusalem. The families were already waiting for the convoy in a small community hut where the goods were distributed.

News of casualties

After this visitation, the group drove back down to where the other members had been waiting and found the next crossroad to go up higher, where it was even more steeply sloped and impossibly muddy, rendering it necessary for the young people and adults (beneficiaries) to come down from their village to push the vehicles in order to reach La Fortaleza where a large number of families were waiting -- the elderly, adults, children and infants. They met at a school where the roof had been blown off by the force of the hurricane. Most of those people had lost their homes and a young man shared with sadness and tears how he had witnessed his wife and two daughters, thirteen and eight years old, say goodbye before

slowly being swallowed under the mud, without being able to help them since he was equally stuck in the mud.



At the end of the project, Elsa Moncada (IAPD) gratefully shared with tears that she was happy to have been part of this first joint service activity between UPF and the North Jersey Y Service Club USA. Maritza Morel said that it was gratifying to see how UPF had such a strong connection with the authorities of the city of Tela, especially thanks to the work of Mario Salinas over the last three years. Without the help of the local authorities, it would have been impossible to deliver these supplies. She recognized the city leaders' great willingness to serve their people since this type of aid is usually only given to easily accessible areas, leaving the distant villages to care for themselves. We were all grateful to be able to assist on this occasion.

From the bottom of our hearts, UPF Honduras deeply thanks the people from New Jersey, USA who, with unconditional love, offered their help for people they did not know. A special thanks to the Y Service North Jersey Club, which was inspired to search for donors under the vision and leadership of its president, Daniel Mohan.

President Mohan met UPF Director Mario Salinas and was introduced to Honduras' needs at the end of 2019 through UPF-USA member Carol Pobanz, making our True Father's direction to "work in solidarity and cooperation with other NGOs around the world..." together with ambassadors for peace, all the more powerful and true, "We have the potential to expand and develop to the next level... following the path toward the final establishment

of world peace."